

Who is the LORD? (Exodus 5:1-6:6)

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2 weeks ago we visited Shiloh Baptist Church in Sacramento.

- It's a black church that's been around since the 1800s.
- We were the only white people there along with the Gregg family.
- It was a very lively service, very lovely people.
- They love preaching Jesus and praising God, body and soul.
- I hope some of that rubs off. We can learn from other churches or other cultures.
- Some of us prefer hands in our pockets as we sing, and as glories of Christ are preached
 - o we don't dare to mutter amen or move a muscle or make any facial expression.
- You may not be comfortable clapping or shouting, but it is biblical to
 - o say amen, to smile, to nod, be moved, raise a hand or at least voice in song.
- We're not in danger of being too wild here, but there's a danger in being too formal
- We're not at a funeral. Our Savior is alive, that should make us alive!

Jesus is alive, let's live like it, sing like it, love each other more in our living Savior

The brethren there send their greetings.

- This brother helped start C4C and Shiloh has supported Didier
- they clapped to hear our kids came from that mission.
- It's good to remember we're all in the same family.
- The Exodus story has long resonated with African American churches.

One old spiritual goes: 'When Israel was in Egyptland...Oppressed so hard they could not stand...

[God said] Go down, Moses, Way down in Egyptland, Tell ole Pharaoh "Let my people go!"

"Thus saith the Lord," old Moses said "...If not I'll smite your firstborn dead!

Let my people go!" [one version says "tell all Pharoes 'Let my people go'"]

That's the context of Ex 5. As the slave trade ended, Absalom Jones, a black pastor in the 1800s preached a sermon that sets up today's. Ex 3-4 says God saw Israel's affliction, heard their cry, knew their sorrow and came down to Egyptland with Moses to let them go. The sermon began:

'These words, my brethren, contain a short account of some of the circumstances which preceded the deliverance of the children of Israel from their captivity and bondage in Egypt. They mention, in the first place, their affliction... work was of a laborious kind: it consisted of making bricks... The least deficiency, in the product of their labour, was punished by beating... their sons... dragged from the arms of their mothers [in ch 1 were] put to death by drowning...

Our text mentions, in the second place, in this situation, they were not forgotten by the God of their fathers, and the Father of the human race...his eye and his ear were constantly open to their complaint: every tear they shed, was preserved, and every groan they uttered, was recorded; in order to testify, at a future day, against the authors of their oppressions. But our text goes further [Ex 3:7-8]: it describes the Judge of the world to be so much moved, with what he saw and what he heard, that he rises from his throne--not to issue a command to the armies of angels... but to come down from heaven, in his own person, in order to deliver them...

...the God of heaven and earth is the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever... He has seen the affliction of our countrymen, with an eye of pity. He has seen the wicked... wars... among the different tribes of the Africans [capturing their own] selling them for slaves...

trinkets for bodies and souls... He has seen the anguish which has taken place, when parents have been torn from their children, and children from their parents, and conveyed, with their hands and feet bound in fetters, on board of ships prepared to receive them. He has seen them thrust in crowds into the holds of those ships, where many of them have perished from the want of air... He has seen them exposed for sale, like horses and cattle... He has seen all the different modes of torture, by means of the whip, the screw, the pincers, and the red hot iron...

Inhuman wretches! though You have been deaf to their cries and shrieks, they have been heard in Heaven... He has heard the prayers that have ascended from the hearts of his people; and he has, as in the case of his ancient and chosen people the Jews, come down to deliver our suffering country-men from the hands of their oppressors. He came down into the United States ... Glory to God... We thank thee, that thou art no respecter of persons, and that thou hast made of one blood all nations of men...O! let us give thanks unto the Lord: let us call upon his name'¹

Amen! As Ex 4 ends, the slaves hear of their emancipation and respond physically in worship.

- In Ex 5 the name of the Lord is proclaimed to the slave master of Egypt.
- But like in America, the proclamation to let the people go free didn't immediately change reality, there would be a big struggle still.
- The order to let the slaves go was defied.
- A hard heart won't let go of its hate, that kind of heart doesn't know the Lord.

Let's read Ex 5: *Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.' "*² *But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go ...*

The title of this message is Who is the LORD?

It's the question of questions, asked in 3 ways:

- 1. In Pharaoh's defiance (5:1-10)**
- 2. In Israel's discouragements (5:11-23)**
- 3. In Yahweh's deliverance (6:1-6)**

Imagine if you got an 5-minute appointment with the governor, president, or a foreign leader:

- As I said before, imagine your 1st line: 'Kim Jong Un, God says let your labor camps go'
- 'Chinese Govt, the God you deny says let the people of Taiwan go to worship, live free'
- 'Palestinian Authority, the King of the Jews owns the land, let them go to the Temple Mt'
- Saudi Arabian King, 'thus says the King of Kings: let my people go to church freely'
- 'Pres. Biden, King Jesus says let the children come to me, do not hinder life by abortion'
- 'Gov. Newsom, the Lord says let them go to school w/out anti-family anti-God teaching'
- Mr. Academic Elite, 'one true God created the world in 6 days and this is what He says.'
- Mr Media Elite, 'thus says the Lord, your sexualized racialized liberalized ideas must go'
- Attn. world: 'you're wrong, the Creator of marriage and gender defines it in His Word'
- you'll see powers that be that claim 'tolerance' change to defiance against God's Word!

Ex 5:1-2 is a question of control and authority, a conflict that still rages (Ps 2)

Job 36 describes ‘*a king ready for battle...hand against God...defiantly against the Almighty.*’² That’s the king of Egypt here. One writer sums up his defiance in v. 2: “Pharaoh asks a question to which the rest of [chapters] 5–15 will be the answer: ‘Who is the LORD...’ laying down his own gauntlet for the fight... Pharaoh’s defiant response, then, serves as the theological context for the section. The remainder of the exodus account is the answer to Pharaoh’s question.”³

The whole book could be titled who is the LORD, who is Yahweh (Hebrew LORD)

‘*I do not know Yahweh*’ means:

- I have no relationship with Yahweh
- I recognize no authority of Yahweh.

Historical context: Pharaoh saw himself as Israel’s god and lord to be obeyed,

- and he saw Israel as his people.
- Now he hears of the LORD God of Israel commanding Pharaoh to obey God
 - o and claiming that Israel is the people belonging to this God
 - o under Yahweh’s lordship and higher authority.

‘Who is this Lord that I should obey his voice?! I do not know this Lord’ (defying and denying)

Pharaoh throws down and will soon have a show down that will show who’s sovereign

Egypt’s prime minister wrote this at the time of the traditional date of the Exodus: ‘What is the king of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father...of all men, alone by himself, without an equal’

- but Ex 4:22 says God is the Father of Israel as His firstborn son.
- Here’s how a different leader spoke to Pharaoh within a century of the message of Yahweh to Pharaoh. The ancient ruler of Gezer began to Pharaoh:

‘Message of Yapahu... your servant, the dirt at your feet. I indeed prostrate myself at the feet of the king, my lord, my god... 7 times, on the stomach and on the back... Who am I, a dog, and what is my house ... and what is anything I have, that the orders of the king, my lord...I should not obey constantly?’⁴

This king asks ‘who is the Lord that I should obey his voice...?’ Moses and Aaron come:

- not at the king’s feet or on their face or with flattery or false humility
- No prostration, groveling, or bowing, just a bold ‘thus says the Lord, the God of Israel’ (i.e., you’re not Israel’s lord or god)!

v. 3 is not disrespectful or unreasonable, asking for 3 days to meet with the God of the Hebrews to sacrifice to Him (there’s records in ancient Egypt of *slaves* given days off to worship deities).

But even if they ask nicely, Pharaoh answers defiantly – v. 4 ends w/ ‘*get back to your burdens!*’

In v. 4 Pharaoh isn’t reasonable. He’s disrespectful to the Lord

- Yahweh will judge Egypt and take Israel out permanently.
- Pharaoh won’t sacrifice his work force or even give any a Sabbath rest.
- v. 5: *Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!”*
- That’s the root word for Sabbath, the rest God would give to Israel in days off.

Pharaoh will give no Sabbaths and will give no straw in v. 6-8 (I'll read that part in 2nd point).

In Ex 20 Sabbath rest is a gift to Israel, servants, foreigners, or even beasts of burden

Egypt's King thinks he's the sovereign Master, that he's in charge and owns Israel, so he says in v. 9 '*Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.*' So he's literally calling God a liar. He's saying 'I'll show Israel who's boss and lord.'

In v. 10 he denies the Lord's authority, defies it, and applies it to himself: ¹⁰ *So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh..."*

- Same wording he decrees in defiance of the divine decree 'thus says the LORD, the God of Israel.'
- He has his henchmen say 'thus says Pharaoh'
 - o implication: 'I'm the real Lord and god over Israel.
 - o I will not give you time off and I will not give you straw.
 - o I'll give you work, not worship. You ask if you can go?
 - o I'll have you go but not for that!' v. 11: **Go and get your straw yourselves...**
In other words 'I'll let your people go, alright, go and slave even harder!'

He's saying "I give commands to go, not you or your Hebrew God!

- I'm the Lord to be obeyed, you're just lazy slaves looking for a 'wanna get away' deal."
¹⁷ *But he said, "You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.'* ¹⁸ **Go now and work...**

That's the same verbs in 4:23, tell Pharaoh '*let my son go that he may serve me [the LORD].*'

Pharaoh's defying that, basically saying

- 'who's your daddy? I Am, you go and serve me alone, you lazy slaves!'
- Pharaoh's saying 'you work for me' (word for 'worship' later, 'worship me?')

Work must never take the place of worship

- Your job must never take the place of Jesus in your life.
- Don't let what you do become your identity or your idol.
- We all need to ask the question 'who is my Lord (functionally)?' or 'what rules me?'
- We don't serve Pharaoh, but do you serve the flesh over your Father in heaven?
- If you obey your desires, that's your master, the NT says.
- Where do you act like you're God? Like you're in charge?
- Pharaoh said 'I don't know the Lord' – do you?
- If not in a personal saving relationship, obey His voice to repent, believe, let go of sin

A 2nd way some ask who the Lord is, not in defiance, #2. In discouragements (like Israel)

Israel will wonder who the Lord is in their trials, when it doesn't make sense.

- In the end of Ex 4 Israel believed the Lord had seen their affliction and visited them
- but in Ex 5 they haven't seen any change, except the affliction is about to get worse
 - o and they'll be visited with more beatings.

⁶ *The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen,* ⁷ *"You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past [workers given resources]; let them go and gather straw for themselves.* ⁸ *But the number of bricks that they made in the*

past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it...¹² So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw." ¹⁴ And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten...

The foremen were Jewish, even the high-level slaves are being beaten now

We have paintings of the brick-making back-breaking slave industry⁵

- mostly naked in the sun, mold for mud, men beating with sticks).
- Bricks were the literal building block of Egypt: homes, buildings, 60-foot-tall walls of cities, pyramids, etc. (1 pyramid took 24.5 million bricks).

An Egyptian writer describes a brick-maker: 'He is dirtier than...pigs from treading under his mud. His clothes are stiff with clay...His sides ache...arms are destroyed...and he washes himself only once a season. He is simply wretched through and through...He is miserable.'⁶

- But now the job sinks lower like quicksand, like a load of bricks on them
- it's gone from bad to worse.

This is the last straw – with daily beatings they won't last without their supply of straw

J.R.R. Tolkien called this sort of thing 'out of the frying-pan into the fire.'

- That's his chapter title when the hobbit Bilbo and his friends went from one peril to a worse predicament, from the wolves trying to eat them (the frying pan)
- to the fire of goblin enemies trying to burn them
- 'Smoke was in Bilbo's eyes, he could feel the heat of the flames'⁷ until they were delivered on eagle's wings.
- Israel can feel the heat but it won't be till later God saves like eagle wings (19:4).

Ex 5 looks like a no-win no hope situation as they're beat for quotas impossible to meet

The issue isn't 'making bricks without straw,

- it's 'without straw provided by Egypt anymore,
- you need to make the same # of bricks with straw that you have to find, w/ no extra time.'
- One pastor I know called this section 'the straw that broke the nation's back.'
- It was already a back-breaking job, but the straw they now had to gather broke the nation of Israel in their spirit.

We read the text, let me summarize: they appeal to Pharaoh but he doubles down, triples down.

¹⁹ The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, "You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day." ²⁰ They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; ²¹ and they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us." ²² Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?

This is bad: Israel wishes bad on Moses, Moses blames God for doing bad and a bad plan

Moses and Israel aren't disbelieving God exists

- they're demoralized by the evil that exists and calling God to act
- Israel thinks Egypt now has the weapon to kill off all Jews, thanks to Moses

Israel verbally shoots the messenger (Moses) and thinks the messenger wants Israel shot.

- They heard Yahweh had looked on them;
 - o in v. 21 they call Yahweh to look on Moses in judgment.

Discouragement tempts us to quit, makes us think it's all over, and blames those trying to help.

- In discouragement, frustration can turn to accusation. ²³ *For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.*"

We can feel that way, we try to do what God tells us to and it gets worse, not better.

- We may do what's right, and everything seems to be going wrong
- We try to do a good thing, but see evil.
- God doesn't deliver from a situation or seem to be doing anything about it. We ask why
- a baby we've prayed for isn't delivered, but is miscarried, believing hearts are broken
- a loved one isn't delivered from a physical disease, you're not delivered from a trial
- a life is lost that God could've delivered, or maybe a family member is lost to their sin
- a loss of employment, or maybe a growing loss of ability or stability can tempt to doubt
- a life-altering event happens, or a long-term cloud of discouragement won't lift. Why?
- discouragement wonders out loud 'who is the LORD? And why doesn't it make sense?'

This text doesn't answer those questions or take away the pain or trial but there are takeaways:

- God is at work when you don't see Him doing anything (v. 23, setting the stage for Ex 6)
- We want to see deliverance, but we need dependence (more and often before any change)
- God's ways and timing are not man's (don't judge His care by your calendar)
- We see Moses being real and raw with God but we're not rely on feelings or emotions
- If men turn against you, turn to God (he had wrong thoughts, but right to bring it to God)
- It's better to lament or even vent to God, He can handle it (Abram, David, Jeremiah, etc.)
- Take it to God, don't take it out on others (Moses to his credit, is interceding for others)

*Have we trials or temptations, is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer⁸*

Moses learned that and later told discouraged Israel who the LORD is: He *'will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged'* (Dt 31:8 NIV). If you're discouraged by what men say or do to you, Heb 12:3 *'consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.'*⁹

That takes us from who the Lord is in discouragements to who the Lord is in deliverance

Ex 6:1 *But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."*

In Hebrew, this is Yahweh speaking, and He addresses both the Hebrews and Egyptians. We'll study ch 6 more deeply next time but I just want to point out 2 verses to answer the 2 questions:

- Pharaoh asked defiantly 'who is Yahweh that I should obey?' 6:1 says He'll soon find out
- God's people wondered in discouragement who the Lord was, why He hadn't delivered?
- v. 6 answers *Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them*

...

This is the answer in deliverance. Who is Yahweh? He says *'I am Yahweh...I will deliver you'*

- and v. 6 goes on *'and I will redeem you...'*
- It's the first time God uses this key word 'redeem' (here to buy back to bring back as His)
- Who is He? Deliverer and Redeemer.
- They would be redeemed by the blood of the lamb in the chapters ahead
 - o and Moses also wrote of Messiah to redeem from the curse (Gen 3:15, 5:29, etc).
- This is bigger than Pharaoh and physical liberation, it's how God works in salvation.
- Who is the Lord that His voice should be obeyed?
 - o The NT tells us Jesus is the Lord and Savior.
- In Ex 5 God hadn't redeemed
 - o but 'there is a redeemer, Jesus, God's Own Son, Lamb of God, Messiah.'

In Ex 6:6 He promises to take them out from their burdens or yoke

- in the gospel He takes our burdens and bears our sorrows.

Egypt's King gave no rest

- but King Jesus says to all who labor, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...rest for your souls ...Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*¹⁰

We'll look at redemption more in the future, but we end with who is the Lord in deliverance?

v. 6 says *'I will deliver you from slavery...'*

- o Rom 6 says *'though you were slaves to sin...you were delivered'* (v. 17 NKJV).
- o *'Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!'* (7:24-25).

Who is the Lord? Saul of Tarsus asked in his conversion 'who are you Lord?' And He learned

- Jesus *'gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age'* (Gal. 1:4)
- and *'Jesus...delivers us from the wrath to come'* (1 Thess 1:10).
- And Paul wrote how if we trust Jesus alone to save, God *'has delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son'* (Col 1:13).

And Peter adds *'the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations'* (2 Pet 2:4 NKJV).

- So we can pray as Peter was taught *'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'*
- As temptations to discouragements or disobedience come,
 - o remember who the Lord is that you should obey Him.

Who is the Lord? Do you know the Lord?

He is Jesus the strong Deliverer.

¹ <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/ajones/thanksgiving1808.html>

² Job 36:24-25 NKJV.

³ W. Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 28, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2012), 39.

⁴ T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 2, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (London; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2017), 56.

⁵ See Kenneth Kitchen, *The Reliability of the Old Testament* (2003), and pictures and summary at <https://www.northlondonchurch.org/ministers-blog/post/pictures-of-the-israelites>

⁶ Mike Wilkerson, *Redemption*, p. 57, citing Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel*, 22-23.

⁷ As cited by Ryken, *Exodus*, p. 149.

⁸ Joseph Scriven, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

⁹ NKJV.

¹⁰ Matthew 11:28-31 NIV.